At Hellgate High School, the PLC journeys are as varied as are the contents taught, and the number of teachers in the building. The following PLCs have been organized in either a Course Team structure or a Career Pathways/Academy structure:

1. Science Construction Academy
2. Business Pathways
3. FACS Pathways
4. Counselors
5. ELA 1
6. ELA 2
7. ELA 3
8. HE 1
9. HE 2
10. Library
11. Algebra 1
12. Geometry & Algebra 2
13. Math Lab
14. Bio 1
15. Earth Science
16. US Government
17. US History
18. Spanish 1 & 2
19. Art
20. Music
21. IB implementation
22. Special Education

To follow the 21st century model where professional development is teacher selected, staff members were guided to choose a PLC focus from one of their teaching assignments. For some teachers this was a difficult task because they are passionate about each of their teaching fields, but since collaboration time is narrowed to Thursday afternoons, teachers were asked to commit to the work in one PLC. It is a goal to create more collaboration opportunities in the 2013-14 Master Schedule by creating common planning times for each of these twenty-two PLCs. We realize the challenge of this goal, so we plan to begin the Master Schedule process during the month of November.

Fall Goal Conferences were conducted in PLC groups instead of with individual teachers. In these conferences the teachers shared with me how they would accomplish the goal of a “guaranteed curriculum” for their content area. Meeting with each team gave me the opportunity to differentiate the PLC process to accommodate teachers understanding of the 4 PLC questions, articulate an action plan for the 2012-13 year for their PLC, and to communicate my expectations for presentations by each PLC team on April 29, 2013.

The purpose for presentations by each team in April is twofold: to present the process the team used to accomplish their goals and to inform all staff members of the content being taught across the school. I am hopeful that by showcasing the variety of processes used by each team, that it will model best-practice methods for others. (aka: action research) I am fighting a misunderstanding that one PLC method is the “right” way. I am trying to create a culture where our PLC work is “just the way we do things.” I am fighting a culture of “just fill in the boxes to show that we did something.” And trying to create a culture where “we work smarter and not harder.” I want their PLC work to be “genuine” “meaningful” and truly the “right” work.

Creating this culture of “real work” and “buy in” is foundational to improving student performance. Once teachers believe in this process, then we can begin to focus on student results. I have a few PLCs that are ready for this next step. (Question two: How do we assess the learning targets for the guaranteed curriculum?) The Health Enhancement teams are actually the teams that are closest to completing this step and I hope that through their presentations in April they will model for the other teams how to focus on student results. I find that when I attempt to collaborate with teams on “how will you know the students have learned this target?” their responses are *confusion*. I will have to build background knowledge on assessment literacy as we proceed to this step. To accomplish this we are being strategic in sending “teacher leaders” to *Assessment Training Institute* (ATI) to build the capacity among staff. I will support the teacher leaders to apply formative assessment strategies to improve student achievement with the goal that their success will breed buy-in from other staff members. I will also continue to use conferences with PLC teams to push their work forward through the four PLC questions, and to celebrate their successes publicly in staff meetings. I will also continue to differentiate for each PLC to help identify which task, lessons, and activities can be taken “off the plate” to create time for the “right” work. For this to be successful, I must build relationships that will foster trust. I must find the opportunities to celebrate with my staff and encourage them that change is not only inevitable, but is also the means to a successful school improvement model. I must continue to provide them with relevant research that builds a “why” for change and guide them through the process until they are independently operating their PLCs successfully.